



H. G. L.

ROYAL CONVERT.

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T H E

ROYAL CONVERT:

A

TRAGEDY:

BY

NICHOLAS ROWE, Esq.

Laudatur et alget.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
CHARLES Lord HALIFAX.

My LORD,

IF I could have the vanity to make a merit of dedicating this TRAGEDY, I should here take an opportunity of telling you, that I am, in this, endeavouring to make the best and only return I am capable of, for all those marks of exceeding goodness and humanity which I have still had the honour to meet with from your Lordship. But since the matter is quite otherwise, since it is highly to my advantage to shelter myself under so great a name; since I have done myself so much honour by it; I am bound to own, with all the gratitude I am capable of, that your Lordship's patronage is a new, and will be a lasting obligation upon me.

Most kinds of poetry, but especially tragedies, come into the world now, like children born under ill stars; a general indifference, or rather disinclination, attends like a bad influence upon them; and after having bustled through ill usage, and a short life, they sleep and are forgotten. The relish of things of this kind is certainly very much altered from what it was some time since; and though I won't presume to censure other people's pleasures, and prescribe to the various tastes of mankind, yet I will take the liberty to say, that those who scorn to be entertained like their forefathers, will hardly substitute so reasonable a diversion in the room of that which they have laid aside. I could wish there were not so much reason as there is to attribute this change of inclinations to a disesteem of learning itself. Too many people are apt to think that books are not necessary to the finishing the character of a fine gentleman, and are therefore easily drawn to despise what they know nothing of: but, my Lord, among all these mortifying thoughts, it is still a pleasure to the Muses, to think there are some men of too delicate understandings to give into the taste of a depraved age; men that have not only the power, but the will, to protect those arts which they love, because they are masters of the

It would be very easy for me to distinguish one among those few, after the most advantageous manner; but all men of common sense have concurred in doing it already, and there is no need of a panegyric.

I could be almost tempted to expostulate with the rest of the world (for I am sure there is no occasion to make an apology to your Lordship) in defence of poetry. I am far from thinking of a good poet as the Stoics did of their wise man, that he was sufficient for every thing, could be every thing, and excel in every thing, as he pleased; yet sure I may be allowed to say, that that brightness, quickness, that strength and greatness of thinking, which is required in any of the nobler kinds of poetry, would raise a man to an uncommon distinction in any profession or business that has a relation to good sense and understanding. One modern instance can at least be given, where the same genius that shone in poetry was found equal to the first employments of the state; and where the same man, who, by his virtue and wisdom, was highly useful to, and instrumental in the safety and happiness of his native country, had been equally ornamental to it by his wit.

This is what I could not help saying, for the honour of an art which has been formerly the favourite of the greatest men. Not that it wants a recommendation to your Lordship, who have always been a constant and generous protector of it. This indeed would be much more properly said to the world, and when I have told them what men have equally adorned it, and been adorned by it, I might not unaptly apply to them what Horace said to the Piles:

————— *Ne ferte pudori*
Sit tibi musa lyre sole s et cantor Apollo.

For my own inconsiderable pretensions to verse, I shall confess, think better even of them than I have ever yet done, if they shall afford me the honour to be always thought,

My Lord,

*Your Lordship's most obedient,
and devoted humble servant,*

N. ROWE.

P R O L O G U E.

Spoken by Mr BETTERTON.

SINCE to your staid forefathers quite contrary,
 You from their pleasures, as their wisdom vary;
 What art, what method, shall the poet find,
 To hit the taste of each fantastic mind?
 Legions of joys your wandering fancies lead,
 Like summer flies which in the shambles breed;
 Each year they swarm anew, and to the last succeed.
 Time was, when fools by fellowship were known,
 But now they stray, and, in this populous town,
 Each cockcomb has a folly of his own.
 Some dress, some dance, some play, not to forget
 Your piquet parties, and your dear ball t;
 Some praise, some rail, some bow, and some make faces,
 Your country squires hunt faces, your court, places;
 The city too fills up the various scene,
 Where fools lay wagers, and where wise men in.
 One rails at Cælia for a late mischance;
 One grumbles, and cries up the power of France:
 This man talks politics, and that takes pills;
 One cures his own, and one the nation's ills.
 Now fiddling, and the charms of sing-song win ye;
 Harmonious Peg, and warbling Valerius.
 As to your drinking—but for that, we spare it,
 Nor with your other vile delights compare it,
 There's something more than brand, there's sense in claret.
 Mean while neglected come, in long disgrace,
 Amongst your many pleasures find no place;
 The virtuous laws of common sense for swearing,
 For damns, like pack-d-juries without hearing.
 Each pun, self for here is wit enough,
 With scornful looks, and supercilious puff,
 To cry—this tragedy's much damnd give it off.
 But now we hope more equal judges come,
 Since Flanders sends the generous Warriors home:
 You that have fought for liberty and laws,
 Who valour the proud Gallic tyrant awes,
 Join to assert the sinking Muses' cause;
 Since the same flame, by different ways express'd,
 Glows in the hero's and the poet's breast;
 The same great thoughts that rouse you to the fight,
 Inspire the Muse, and bid the Poet write.

Dramatis Personæ.

HENCIST, King of Kent, son to Hengist, the first Saxon invader of Britain.

ARIBERT, his brother.

OFFA, a Saxon Prince.

SEOFRID, first minister and favourite to the King.

OSWALD, friend to Aribert.

RODOGUNE, a Saxon princess, sister to Offa, betrothed to the King.

ETHELINDA, a British lady, privately married to Aribert.

Priests, Officers, Soldiers, and other attendants.

SCENE *in KENT, about twenty years after the first invasion of Britain by the Saxons.*

T H E
R O Y A L C O N V E R T.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

A Palace.

Enter ARIBERT and OSWALD:

ARIBERT.

SUCH are, my friend, the joys our loves have known,
So still to be desired, so ever new,
Nor by fiction pall'd, nor chang'd by absence.
Whatever the poets dreamt of their Elysium,
Or what the saints believe of the first paradise,
When Nature was not yet deform'd by Winter,
But one perpetual beauty crown'd the year,
Such have we found 'em still, still, still the same.

Osw. Such grant, kind Heaven, their course to be for ever!

But yet, my Prince, forgive your faithful Oswald,
If he believes you melt with too much tenderness:
Your noble heart forgets its native greatness,
And sinks in softness, when you languish thus:
Thus sigh and murmur but for six days absence.

Arb. Chide not; but think if e'er, when thou wert young,

Thou lov'd'st thyself, how thou wert wont to judge
Of time, of love, of absence and impatience.

What! six long days, and never write nor send!

Though Adelmar and Kenwald, faithful both,

Were left behind to bring me tidings from her:

How, Elinorda! how hast thou forget me!

A

Osw. Perhaps I err; but if the pain be such,
Why is the fair one who alone can ease it,
Thine far divided from your longing arms?
'Twere better ne'er to part, than thus to mourn.

Ari. Oh, Oswald! is there not a fatal cause?
Thou know'st my Ethelinda——

Osw. Is a Christian;
A name by Saxons, and their gods, abhorr'd.
To me her differing faith imports not much;
'Tis true, indeed, bred to my country's manners,
I worship as my fathers did before me.
Unpractis'd in disputes, and wrangling schools,
I seek no farther knowledge, and so keep
My mind at peace, nor know the pain of doubting;
What others think I judge not of too nicely,
But hold, all honest men are in the right.

Ari. Then know yet more; for my whole breast is
thine.

Ev'n all my secret soul: I am a Christian.
'Tis wonderful to tell; for oh, my Oswald,
I listen'd to the charmer of my heart,
Still, as the night that fled away, I sat,
I heard her, with an eloquence divine,
Reason of holy and mysterious truths;
Of heav'n's most righteous doom, of man's injustice;
Of laws to curb the will, and bind the passions;
Of life, of death, and immortality;
Of gnashing fiends beneath, and pains eternal;
Of starry thrones, and endless joys above.
My very soul was aw'd, was shook within me;
Methought I heard distinct, I saw most plain,
Some angel, in my Ethelinda's form,
Point out my way to everlasting happiness.

Osw. 'Tis wonderful indeed! and yet great souls,
By nature half divine, soar to the stars,
And hold a near acquaintance with the gods.
And oh, my Prince, when I survey thy virtue,
I own the seal of heav'n imprinted on thee;
I stand convinc'd that good and holy powers
Inspire and take delight to dwell within thee.
Yet crowds will still believe, and priests will teach,
As wand'ring fancy, and as int'rest leads.

How

How will the King and our fierce Saxon chiefs
Approve this bride and faith? Had royal Hengist
Thy father liv'd!——

Art. 'Tis on that rock we perish;
Thou bring'st his dreadful image to my thoughts,
And now he stands before me, stormy, fierce,
Imperious, unrelenting, and to death
Tenacious of his purpose once resolv'd.
Just such he seems, as when severe and frowning
He forc'd the King, my brother, and myself,
To kneel and sweat at Woden's cruel altar,
First, never to forego our country's gods;
Then made us vow with deepest imprecations,
If it were either's fortune e'er to wed,
Never to chuse a wife among the Christians.

Osse. Have you not fail'd in both?

Art. 'Tis true, I have;
Put for a cause so just, so worthy of me,
That not t'have fail'd in both, but I have fail'd.
Yes, Oswald, by the conscious judge within,
So do I stand acquitted to myself,
That were my Ethelinda free from danger,
On peril of my life I would make known,
And to the world avow my love and faith.

Osse. I dare not, nay, 'tis sure I cannot blame you:
You are the secret worship of my soul,
To me so perfect that you cannot err.
But, oh! my Prince, let me conjure you now,
By that most faithful service I've still paid you,
By love, and by the gentle Ethelinda,
Be cautious of your danger, rest in silence.
In holy matters, zeal may be your guide,
And lift you on her flaming wings to Heav'n;
But here on earth trust reason, and be safe.

Art. 'Tis true, the present angry face of things
Bespeaks our coolest thoughts: the British King,
Ambrosius, arms, and calls us forth to battle,
Demanding back the fruitful fields of Kent,
By Vortigern to royal Hengist giv'n;
A mean reward for all those Saxon lives
Were lost in propping Britain's sinking state.

Osse. The war with Britain is a distant danger,

Nor to be weigh'd with our domestic fears.
 Young Offa, chief among our Saxon princes,
 Who, at the King's entreaty, friendly came
 From northern Jutland, and the banks of Elbe,
 With twice ten thousand warriors to his aid,
 Frowns on our court, complains aloud of wrongs,
 And wears a public face of discontent.

Ari. 'Tis said he is offended, that the King
 Delays to wed his sister.

Ofw. 'Twas agreed,
 'Twas made the first condition of their friendship,
 And sworn with all the pomp of priests and altars,
 That beauteous Rodogune should be our queen:
 Then wherefore this delay? the time was fix'd,
 The feast was bid, and mirth proclaim'd to all;
 The crowd grew jovial with the hopes of holydays,
 And each, according to our country's manner,
 Provok'd his fellow with a friendly bowl,
 And blest'd the royal pair: when on the morn,
 The very morn that should have join'd their hands,
 The King forbade the rites.

Ari. Two days are past,
 Not has my brother yet disclos'd the cause.
 Last night, at parting from him, he stopt short,
 Then catch'd my hand, and with a troubled accent,
 With words that spoke like secret shame and sorrow,
 He told me he had something to impart,
 And wish'd that I would wait him in the morning.

Ofw. But see, Prince Offa, and his beauteous sister!
 The King's most favour'd counsellor, old Seofrid,
 Is with 'em too.

Ari. Retire; I would not meet 'em.
 That princess, Oswald, is esteem'd a wonder.
 To me she seems most fair; and yet, methinks,
 Dost thou not mark? there is I know not what
 Of fullen and severe, of fierce and haughty,
 That pleases not, but awes; I gaze astonish'd,
 And fear prevents desire.——So men tremble,
 When light'ning shoots in glittering trails along:
 It shines, 'tis true, and gilds the gloomy night;
 But where it strikes, 'tis fatal. [*Exeunt Ari. and Ofw.*

Enter

Enter Ossa, Rodogune, Seoirid, and Attendants.

Ossa. By Woden, no! I will not think he means it;
Revenge had else been swift.—So high I hold
The honour of a soldier and a King,
I wou'd not think your master meant to wrong me.
Let him beware, however!—jealous friendship,
And beauty's tender fame, can brook no slights.
What in a foe I pardon or despise,
Is deadly from a friend, and so to be repaid.

Seoirid. Whatever fame or ancient story tells,
Of brother's love, or celebrated friends,
Whose faith, in perils oft, and oft in death,
Severely had been try'd, and never broke,
Such is the truth, and such the grateful mind
Of royal Hengill to the princely Ossa.
Nor you, fair Princess, frown, if wars and troubles,
[To Rodogune.

If watchful councils, and if cares, which wait
On Kings, the nursing-fathers of their people,
With-hold a while the monarch from your arms.

Rod. When fierce Ambrosius leads the Britons forth,
Thunders in arms, and shakes the dusty field,
It suits thy wary master's caution well
To sit with dreaming hoary heads at council,
And waste the midnight taper in debates.
But let him still be wise, consult his safety,
And trouble me no more. Does he send thee
With tales of dull respect, and faint excuses?
Tell him he might have spar'd the fool and flatterer,
Till some kind friend had told him I languish'd,
How like a turtle I bemoan'd his absence.

Seoirid. Pardon, fair Excellence, if torturing ago
Presumes the passion I was bid to paint,
And drops the tale imperfect from my tongue.
But lovers best can plead their cause themselves;
And see your slave, the King, my master, comes,
To move your gentle heart with faithful vows,
And pay his humble homage at your feet.

Enter the King, Guanas, and other Attendants.

King. But that I trust not to that babbler, Fame,

Who, careless of the majesty of kings,
 Scatters lewd lies among the crowd, and wins
 The easy ideots to believe in monsters,
 I could have much to charge you with, my brother :
 I stand accus'd——

Offa. How Sir ?

King. So speaks report,
 As wanting to my honour and my friend ;
 By you I stand accus'd.

Offa. Now by our friendship,
 If that be yet an oath, resolve me, Hengist,
 Whence are those doubts between us, whence this cold-
 ness ?

Say then, who know't what sudden secret thought
 Has slept between, and dash'd the public joy.
 Thou call'st me brother ; wherefore wait the priests,
 And suffer Hymen's holy fires to languish !
 What hinders but that now the rites begin,
 That now we lose all thoughts of past displeasure,
 And in the temple tie the sacred knot
 Of love and friendship to endure for ever ?

King. What hinders it indeed, but that which makes
 This medley war within ? but that which causes
 This sickness of the soul, and weighs her down
 With more than mortal cares ?

Offa. What shall I call
 This secret gloomy grief, that hides its head,
 And loves to lurk in shades ? have royal minds
 Such thoughts as shun the day ?

King. Urge me no farther ;
 But, like a friend, be willing not to know
 What to reveal would give thy friend a pain.
 Be still the partner of my heart, and share
 In arms and glory with me : but, oh, leave,
 Leave me alone to struggle thro' one thought,
 One secret anxious pang that jars within me,
 That makes me act a madman's part before thee,
 And talk confusion ! — If thou art my friend,
 Thou hast heard me, and be satisfy'd — if not,
 I have too much descended from myself
 To make the mean request — but rest we here.
 To you, fair Princesses——

Red. No!—there needs no more ;
For I would spare thee the unready tale.
Know, faithless King, I give thee back thy vows,
And bid thee sin secure, be safely perjur'd :
Since if our gods behold thee with my eyes,
Their thunder shall be kept for nobler vengeance,
And what they scorn, like me, they shall forgive.

King. When anger lightens in the fair one's eyes,
Lowly we bow, as to offended Heav'n,
With blind obedience, and submissive worship ;
Nor with too curious boldness rashly reason
Of what is just or unjust : such high pow'r
Is to itself a rule, and cannot err ;
Yet this may be permitted me to speak,
How'er the present circumstance reproach me,
Yet still my heart avows your beauty's pow'r,
My eyes confess you fair.—

Red. Whate'er I am
Is of myself, by native worth existing,
Secure and independent of thy praise ;
Nor let it seem too proud a boast, if minds
By nature great, are conscious of their greatness,
And hold it mean to borrow ought from flattery.

King. You are offended, Lady.

Red. Hengist, no.
Perhaps thou think'st this generous indignation,
That blushing burns upon my glowing cheek,
And sparkles in my eye, a woman's weakness,
The malice of a poor forsaken maid,
Who rails at faithless men.—Mistaken monarch !—
For know e'en from the first my soul disdain'd thee ;
Nor am I left by thee, but thou by me
So was thy falsehood to my will subservient,
And by my purpose bound. Thus man, tho' limited
By fate, may vainly think his actions free,
While all he does was at his hour of birth,
Or by his gods, or potent stars ordain'd.

Offa. No more, my sister ; let the gown-men talk,
And mark out right and wrong in noisy courts ;
While the brave find a nearer way to justice,
They hold themselves the balance and the sword,
And suffer wrong from none. 'Tis much beneath me

To ask again the debt you owe to honour ;
 So that be satisfy'd we still are friends,
 And brothers of the war But mark me, Hengist,
 I am not us'd to wait ; and if this day
 Pass unregarded as the former two,
 Soon as to-morrow dawns expect me——

King. Where ?

Offa. Arm'd in the field.

Seef. Beseech you, Sir, be calm. [To the King.

The valiant Prince ——

Offa. Tho' I cou'd wish it otherwise.
 And since the honour of the Saxon name,
 And empire here in Britain, rests up n thee,
 Believe me, I would still be found thy friend.

[*Exeunt Offa, Rodogune, and Attendants.*

King. No, I renounce that friendship: perish too,
 Perish that name and empire both for ever ;
 What are the kingdoms of the peopled earth,
 What are their purple, and their crowns to me,
 If I am curs'd within, and want that peace
 Which every slave enjoys ?

Seef. My royal master,
 It racks my aged heart to see you thus ;
 But, oh ! what aid, what counsel can I bring you,
 When all you eastern down, ev'n to the surge
 That bellowing beats on Dover's chalky cliff,
 With crested helmets thick embattled shines ;
 With these your friends, what are you but the greatest ?
 With these your foes—Oh, let me lo'se that thought,
 And rather think I see you Britain's king,
 Ambrosius vanquish'd, and the farthest Picts
 Submitted to your sway, tho' the same scene
 Discover'd to my view the haughty Rodogune
 Plac'd on your throne, and partner of your bed.

King. What ! shou'd I barter beauty for ambition,
 Forlake my heav'n of love, to reign in hell ?
 Take a domestic fury to my breast,
 And never know one hour of peace again !
 Statesman, thou reason'st ill. By mighty Thor,
 Who wields the thunder, I will rather chafe
 To meet their fury. Let 'em come together,
 Young Offa and Ambrosius. Tho' my date

Of mortal life be short, it shall be glorious,
Each minute shall be rich in some great action,
To speak the king, the hero, and the lover.

Seaf. The hero and the king are glorious names;
But oh! my master, wherefore is the lover?
In Honour's name remember what you are;
Break from the bondage of this feeble passion,
And urge your way to glory: leave with scorn
Unmanly pleasures to unmanly minds,
And thro' the rough, the thorny paths of danger,
Aspire to virtue, and immortal greatness.

King. Hence with thy hungry, dull, untimely morals,
The fond deluding sophistry of schools.
Who would be great, but to be happy too?
And yet such idiots are we, to exchange
Our peace and pleasure for the trifling glory.

What is the monarch, mighty, rich, and great?
What, but the common victim of the state?
Born to grow old in cares, to waste his blood,
And still be wretched for the public good.
So, by the priests, the nobles of the kind
Is to atone the angry gods design'd;
And while the meaner sort from death are freed,
The mighty bull, that wont the herd to lead,
Is doom'd for fatal excellence to bleed.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

Enter the KING and SEGFRIÐ.

KING.

NO more of these unnecessary doubts:
Thy cold, thy cautious age is vainly anxious;
Thy fears are inauspicious to my courage,
And chill the native ardour of my soul.
This sullen cloudy sky that bodes a storm
Shall clear, and every danger fleet away:
Our Saxons shall forget the present discord,
And urge the Britains with united arms;
Hymen shall be aton'd, shall join two hearts

Agreeing,

Agreeing, kind, and fitted for each other,
And Aribert shall be the pledge of peace.

Secf. Propitious god of love, incline his heart
To melt before her eyes, to meet her wishes,
And yield submission to the haughty maid.
Thou that delight'st in cruel wantonness,
To join unequal necks beneath thy yoke,
For once be gentle, and inspire both hearts
With mutual flames, that each may burn alike.
Oft hast thou ruin'd kingdoms, save one now;
And those who curs'd thee, parsimonious Age
And rigid Wisdom, shall raise altars to thee.

Enter ARIBERT.

King. But see he comes, and brings our wishes with
him.

Oh, Aribert! my soul has long desir'd thee,
Has waited long for thy relief, and wanted
To share the burden which she bears with thee,
And give thee half her sorrows.

Ari. Give me all,
E'en all the pain you feel, and let my truth
Be greatly try'd; let there be much to suffer,
To prove how much my willing heart can bear,
To ease my King, my brother, and my friend.

King. I know thee ever gentle in thy nature,
Yielding and kind, and tender in thy friendship;
And therefore all my hope of peace dwells with thee.
For, oh! my heart has labour'd long with pain;
I have endur'd the rage of secret grief,
A malady that burns and rankles inward,
And wanted such a hand as thine to heal me.

Ari. Speak it, nor wound the softness of my soul
With these obscure complainings: speak, my Lord.

King. First then, this fatal marriage is my curse;
This galling yoke to which my neck is doom'd;
This bride—she is my plague—she haunts my dreams,
Invades the softer silent hour of rest,
And breaks the balmy slumber. Night grows tedious,
She seems to lag, and hang her sible wings;
And yet I dread the dawning of the morn:

As

As if some screaming spirit had shriek'd, and call'd,
Hengist, arise, to-morrow is thy last.

Ari. A thousand speaking griefs are in your eyes,
To tell the rack within—I read it plain.

But, oh! my King, what prophet could have dreamt
A turn like this? that beauty should destroy,
And love, which should have blest'd you, curs'd you most.

King. Oh! wherefore nam'st thou love? can there be
love,

When choice, the free, the cheerful voice of nature,
And Reason's dearest privilege is wanting?

What cruel laws impose a bride, or bridegroom,
On any brute but man? Observe the beasts,
And mark the feather'd kind; does not the turtle,
When Venus and the coming spring incite him,
Chase out his mate himself, and love her most,
Because he likes her best? but kings must wed,
(Curse on the hard condition of their royalty!)
That sordid slaves may sweat and eat in peace.

Ari. 'Tis hard indeed!—Would she had never come,
This——

King. So would I:—but now——

Ari. Ay! now what remedy?

When to refuse the Saxon Osa's sister
Shall shake your throne, and make the name of Hengist,
The famous, the victorious name of Hengist,
Grow vile and mean in Britain.

King. Yes, my brother,
There is a remedy, and only one.
This proud imperious fair, whose haughty soul
Disdains the humble monarchs of the earth,
Who soars elate, affects to tread the stars,
And scorns to mingle but with those above,
Ev'n she, with all that majesty and beauty,
The proudest and the fairest of her sex,
She has the passions of a very woman,
And doats on thee, my Aribert.

Ari. On me!——

What means my Lord? impossible!

King. 'Tis true;
As true as that my happiness depends
Upon her love to thee. My faithful Scofid

Has pierc'd into her very inmost heart,
And found thee reigning there.

Ari. Then all is plain :

My swelling heart heaves at the wrong you do me,
And wo't not be repress'd. Some fiend from hell
Has shed his poison in your royal breast,
And stung you with the gnawing canker, Jealousy.
But wherefore should I seek for fiends from hell,
And trace the malice of the thought from far,
Since the perfidious author stands confess'd ?
This villain has traduc'd me.——

Seof. By the soul

Of your victorious father, royal Hengist,
My ever-gracious, ever-honour'd master,
Much have you wrong'd your faithful Seofrid,
To think that I would kindle wrath betwixt you,
Or strive to break your holy bond of brotherhood.

King. No, Anbert ; accuse him not, nor doubt
His oft, his well-try'd faith. But call thy eyes
Back on thyself, and while I hold the mirror,
Survey thyself, the certain cause of love ;
Survey thy youthful form, by Nature fashion'd
The most unerring pattern of her skill ;
The pomp of loveliness she spreads all o'er thee,
And decks thee lavishly with ev'ry grace,
That charms in woman or commands in man ;
Behold—nor wonder then if crowns be scorn'd,
And purple majesty looks vile before thee.

Ari. Oh, whither, whither would you lead ? and why
This prodigality of ill-tim'd praise ?

Seof. Were you not all my royal master said,
Form'd to enthral the hearts of the soft sex,
Yet that she loves is plain, from——

Ari. Hence, thou lyeophant !

Seof. Your pardon, Sir ; it has not been my office
To forge a tale, or cheat your ear with flattery,
Nor have I other meaning than your service ;
But that the Princess loves you is most true.
Egma, the chief, most favour'd of her women,
The only partner of her secret soul,
To me avow'd her passion : and now, when
Her haughty looks resent the King's delay,

Yet in her heart with pleasure she applauds it,
And would forego, tho' hard to womankind,
The pride, high place and dignity of empire,
To share an humble fate with princely Aribert.

King. Why dost thou turn away? wherefore deform
The grace and sweetness of thy smiling youth,
With that ungentle frown? art thou not pleas'd
To see the tyrant Beauty kneel before thee,
Divested of her pride, and yield to thee
Unask'd, a prize for which, like Grecian Helen,
The great ones of the earth might strive in arms,
And empires well be lost?

Ari. Are we not brothers?
We are; and Nature form'd us here alike;
Save that her partial hand gave all the majesty
And greatness to my King, and left me rich
Only in plainness, friendship, truth, and tenderness.
Then wonder not our passions are the same;
That the same objects cause our love and hate.
You say, you cannot love this beauteous stranger;
Is not my heart like yours?

King. Come near, my brother;
And while I lean thus fondly on thy bosom,
I will disclose my inmost soul to thee,
And shew thee ev'ry secret sorrow there.
I love, my Aribert; I dote to death:
The raging flame has touch'd my heart, my brain,
And madness will ensue.

Ari. 'Tis most unhappy!
But say, what royal maid, or Saxon born,
Or in the British court, what fatal beauty
Can rival Rodogune's imperial charms?

King. 'Tis all a tale of wonder, 'tis a riddle.
High on a throne, and royal as I am,
I want a slave's consent to make me happy.
Nay, more, possess'd of her I love, or Love,
Or some divinity more strong than Love,
Forbids my bliss, nor have I yet enjoy'd her.
Tho' I have taught my haughty heart to bow,
Tho' lowly as she is, of birth obscure,
And of a race unknown, I oft have offer'd
To raise her to my throne, make her my Queen;

Yet still her colder heart denies my suit,
And, weeping, still she answers, 'tis in vain.

Ari. Mysterious all, and dark ! yet such is Love,
And such the laws of his fantastic empire.
The wanton boy delights to bend the mighty,
And 'toss's at the vain wisdom of the wife.

King. Here in my palace, in this next apartment,
Unknown to all but this my faithful Seofrid,
The charmer of my eyes, my heart's dear hope
Remains, at once my captive and my Queen.

Ari. Ha ! in your palace, here ! —

King. Ev'n here, my brother.
But thou, thou shalt behold her ; for to thee,
As to my other self, I trust. The cares
Of courts, and tyrant business, draw me hence ;
But Seofrid shall stay, and to thy eyes

[The King signs to Seofrid, who goes out.]

Disclose the secret treasure. Oh ! my Aribert,
Thou wo't wonder what distracts my peace,
When thou behold'st those eyes ! Pity thy brother,
And from the beach lend him thy friendly hand ;
Lest while conflicting with a sea of sorrows,
The proud waves over bear him, and he perish.

Ari. Judge me, just Heav'n, and you, my royal brother,

If my own life be dear to me as yours.
All that my scanty power can give is yours.
If I am circumscrib'd by fate, oh ! pity me,
That I can do no more ; for oh ! my King,
I would be worthy of a brother's name,
Would keep up all my int'rest in your heart,
That when I kneel before you (as it soon
May happen that I shall) when I fall prostrate,
And doubtfully and trembling ask a boon,
The greatest you can give, or I can ask,
I may find favour in that day before you,
And bless a brother's love, that bids me live.

King. Talk not of asking, but command my pow'r.
By Thor, the greatest of our Saxon gods,
I swear, the day that sees thee join'd to Rodogune,
Shall see thee crown'd and partner of my throne.
Whate'er our arms shall conquer more in Britain,

Thine

Thine be the pow'r, and mine but half the name.
 With joy to thee, my Aribert, I yield
 The wreaths and trophies of the dully field;
 To thee I leave this noblest isle to sway,
 And teach the stubborn Britons to obey;
 While from my cares to beauty I retreat;
 Drink deep the luscious banquet, and forget
 That crowns are glorious, or that Kings are great. }
 [Exit King.]

Manet ATRIBERT.

Ari. Oh fatal love!—curst inauspicious flame!
 Thy baleful fires blaze o'er us like a comet,
 And threaten discord, desolation, rage,
 And most malignant mischief.—Lov'd by Rodogune!
 What, I!—must I wed Rodogune!—O misery!—
 Fantastic cruelty of hoodwink'd chance!
 There is no end of thought—the labyrinth winds,
 And I am lost for ever—Oh! where now,
 Where is my Ethelinda now! that dear one,
 That gently us'd to breathe the sounds of peace,
 Gently as dews descend, or slumbers creep;
 That us'd to brood o'er my tempestuous soul,
 And hush me to a calm.

Enter SEOFRID and ETHELINDA.

Seof. Thus still to weep,
 Is to accuse my royal master's truth.
 He loves you with the best, the noblest meaning;
 With honour——

Eth. Keep, oh keep him in that thought,
 And save me from pollution. Let me know
 All miseries beside, each kind of sorrow
 And prove me with variety of pains,
 Whips, racks, and flames; for I was born to suffer:
 And when the measure of my woes is full,
 That Pow'r in whom I trust will set me free.

Ari. It cannot be—No, 'tis illusion all. [*Seeing her.*
 Some mimic phantom wears the lovely form,
 Has learnt the music of her voice to mock me,
 To strike me dead with wonder and with fear.

Eth. And do I see thee, then, my Lord! my Aribert!
 B 2 What,

What, once more hold thee in my trembling arms !
Here let my days, and here my sorrows end,
I have enough of life.

Seof. Ha ! what is this ?

But mark a little farther.

Eth. Keep me here,
Oh bind me to thy breast, and hold me fast ;
For if we part once more, 'twill be for ever.
It is not to be told what ruin follows :
'Tis more than death, 'tis all that we can fear ;
And we shall never, never meet again.

Ari. Then here, thus folded in each others arms,
Here, let us here resolve to die together ;
Defy the malice of our cruel fate,
And thus preserve the sacred bond inviolable,
Which Heav'n and Love ordain'd to last for ever.
But 'tis in vain, 'tis torn, 'tis broke already ;
And envious hell, with its more potent malice,
Has ruin'd and deform'd the beauteous work of Heav'n :
Else, wherefore art thou here ! tell me at once,
And strike me to the heart—but 'tis too plain :
I read the wrongs—I read the horrid incest——

Seof. Ha, incest ! said he, incest !

[*Aside.*

Eth. Oh ! forbear

The dreadful impious sound ; I shake with horror
To hear it nam'd. Guard me, thou gracious Heav'n,
Thou that hast been my sure defence 'till now,
Guard me from hell, and that its blackest crime.

Ari. Yes, ye celestial host, ye saints and angels,
She is your care, you ministers of goodness.
For this bad world is leagu'd with hell against her,
And only you can save her.—I myself, [To *Eth.*
Ev'n I am sworn thy foe, I have undone thee,
My fondness now betrays thee to destruction.

Eth. Then all is bad indeed.

Ari. Thou seest it not.

My heedless tongue has talk'd away thy life :
And mark the minister of both our fates ;

[*Pointing to Seofrid.*

Mark with what joy he hugs the dear discovery,
And thanks my folly for the fatal secret :
Mark how already in his working brain

He

He forms the well-concerted scheme of mischief:
'Tis fix'd 'tis done, and both are doom'd to death——
And yet there is a pause—if graves are silent,
And the dead wake not to molest the living,
Be death thy portion—die, and with thee die
The knowledge of our loves.

[Aribert catches hold of Seofrid with one hand, with
the other draws his sword, and holds it to his breast.

Seof. What means my Lord?

Eth. Oh hold! for mercy's sake restrain thy hand.

[Holding his hand.

Blot not thy innocence with guileless blood.

What would thy rash, thy frantic rage intend?

Ari. Thy safety and my own—

Eth. Trust 'em to Heav'n.

Seof. Has then my hoary head deserv'd no better,
Than to behold my royal master's son
Lift up his armed hand against my life?

Oh Prince! oh wherefore burn your eyes, and why,
Why is your sweetest temper turn'd to fury?

Ari. O thou hast seen and heard and known too much;
Hast pry'd into the secret of my heart,
And found the certain means of my undoing.

Seof. Where is the merit of my former life,
The try'd experience of my faithful years!
Are they forgot, and can I be that villain!

Ari. Thou wert my father's old, his faithful servant.

Seof. Now by thy life, our empire's other hope,
O royal youth, I swear my heart bleeds for thee;
Nor can this object of thy fond desire,
This lovely weeping fair be dearer to thee,
Than thou art to thy faithful Seofrid
I saw thy love, I heard thy tender sorrows,
With somewhat like an anxious father's pity,
With cares, and with a thousand fears for thee.

Ari. What! is it possible!

Seof. Of all the names

Religion knows, point the most sacred out,
And let me swear by that.

Ari. I would believe thee.

Forgive the madness of my first despair,

[Letting fall his sword.

And if thou hast compassion, shew it now ;
 Be now that friend, be now that father to me,
 Be now that guardian angel which I want ;
 Have pity on my youth, and save my love.

Seof. First then, to stay these sudden gusts of passion
 That hurry you from reason, rest assur'd
 The secret of your love lives with me only.
 The dangers are not small that seem to threaten you ;
 Yet, would you trust you to your old man's care,
 I durst be bold to warrant yet your safety.

Ari. Perhaps the ruling hand of Heav'n is in it :
 And working thus unseen by second causes,
 Ordains thee for its instrument of good,
 To me, and to my love. Then be it so,
 I trust thee with my life ; but oh ! yet more,
 I trust thee with a treasure that transcends
 To infinite degrees the life of Aribert ;
 I trust thee with the partner of my soul,
 My wife, the kindest, dearest, and the truest,
 That ever wore the name.

Seof. Now blessings on you —
 May peace of mind and mutual joys attend
 To crown your fair affections. May the sorrows,
 That now sit heavy on you, pass away,
 And a long train of smiling years succeed,
 To pay you for the past.

Ari. It was my chance,
 On that distinguish'd day when valiant Flavian,
 A name renown'd among the British chiefs,
 Fell by the swords of our victorious Saxons,
 To rescue this his daughter from the violence
 Of the fierce soldiers rage. Nor need I tell thee,
 For thou thyself behold'st her, that I lov'd her,
 Lov'd her and was lov'd ; our meeting hearts
 Consented soon, and marriage made us one.
 Her holy faith and Christian cross, oppos'd
 Against the Saxon gods, join'd with the memory
 Of the dread King my father's fierce command,
 Urg'd me to seek my Ethelinda's safety,
 And hide her from the world. Just to my wish,
 Beneath the friendly covert of a wood,
 Close by whose side the silver Medway ran,

I found

I found a little pleasant, lonely cottage,
A mansion fit for innocence and love,
Had but a guard of angels dwelt around it
To keep off violence——But forc'd from thence——
By whom betray'd——Why I behold her here——
There I am lost——

Eth. There my sad part begins.

It was the second morn since thou hadst left me,
When through the wood I took my usual way,
To seek the coolness of the well-spread shade
That overlooks the flood. On a fear branch,
Low bending to the bank, I sat me down,
Musing and still; my hand sustain'd my head,
My eyes were fix'd upon the passing stream,
And all my thoughts were bent on Heav'n and thee;
When sudden through the woods a bounding stag
Rush'd headlong down, and plung'd amidst the river.
Nor far behind, upon a foaming horse,
There follow'd hard a man of royal port.
I rose, and would have fought the thicker wood;
But while I hurry'd on my hasty flight,
My heedless feet deceiv'd me, and I fell.
Straight leaping from his horse, he rais'd me up.
Surpriz'd and troubled at the sudden chance,
I begg'd he would permit me to retire;
But he, with furious, wild, disorder'd looks,
His eyes and glowing visage flashing flame,
Swore 'twas impossible: he never would,
He could not leave me; with ten thousand ravings,
The dictates of his looser rage, at length
He seiz'd my trembling hand: I shriek'd and call'd
To Heav'n for aid, when, in a luckless hour,
Your faithful servants, Ademar and Kenwald,
Came up, and lost their lives in my defence.

Ari. Where will the horror of thy tale have end?

Eth. The furious King (for such I found he was)
By three attendants join'd, bore me away,
Resistless, dying, senseless with my tears.
Since then, a wretched captive, I deplore
Our common woes; for mine, I know, are thine.

Ari. Witness the sorrows of the present hour,
The fears that rend ev'n now my lab'ring heart,

For

For thee, and for myself. And yet, alas !
 What are the present ills, compar'd to those
 That yet remain behind, for both to suffer ?
 Think where thy helpless innocence is lodg'd ;
 The rage of lawless pow'r, and burning lust,
 Are bent on thee ; 'tis hell's important cause,
 And all its blackest fiends are arm'd against thee.

Eth. 'Tis terrible ! my fears are mighty on me,
 And all the coward woman trembles in me.
 But oh ! when hope and never-failing faith
 Revive my fainting soul, and lift my thoughts
 Up to yon azure sky, and burning lights above,
 Methinks I read my safety written there ;
 Methinks I see the warlike host of Heav'n
 Radiant in glittering arms, and beamy gold.
 The great angelic Pow'rs go forth by bands,
 To succour truth and innocence below.
 Hell trembles at the sight, and hides its head
 In utmost darkness ; while on earth each heart,
 Like mine, is fill'd with peace and joy unutterable.

Seof. Whatever gods there be, their care you are.
 Nor let your gentle breast harbour one thought
 Of outrage from the King : his noble nature,
 Though warm, though fierce, and prone to sudden passions,
 Is just and gentle, when the torrent rage
 Ebbs out, and cooler reason comes again.
 Should he (which all ye holy Pow'rs avert)
 Urg'd by his love, rush on to impious force,
 If that thou'd happen, in that last extreme,
 On peril of my life I will assist you,
 And you shall find your safety in your flight.

Ari. Oh guard her innocence, let all thy care
 Be watchful to preserve her from dishonour.

Seof. Rest on my diligence and caution safe.
 Ere twice the ruler of the day return,
 To gild the chalky cliffs on Britain's shore,
 Some favourable moment shall be found
 To move the King your royal brother's heart,
 With the sad tender story of your loves.
 'Till then be cheer'd, and hide your inward sorrows
 With well dissembled necessary smiles ;
 Let the King read compliance in your locks,

A free and ready yielding to his wishes.
At present, to prevent his doubts, 'twere fit
That you shou'd take a hasty leave, and part.

Eth. What! must we part?

Seof. But for a few short hours,
That you may meet in joy, and part no more.
Ari. Oh fatal sound! Oh grief unknown 'till now!
While thou art present, my sad heart seems lighter:
I gaze, and gather comfort from thy beauty;
Thy gentle eyes send forth a quick'ning spirit,
And feed the dying lamp of life within me;
But oh! when thou art gone, and my fond eyes
Shall seek thee all around, but seek in vain,
What pow'r, what angel sha'l supply thy place,
Shall help me to support my sorrows then,
And save my soul from death!

Eth. My life, my lord,
What would my heart say to thee? — but no more——
Oh lift thy eyes up to that holy pow'r,
Whose wond'rous truths, and majesty divine,
Thy Ethelinda taught thee first to know;
There fix thy faith, and triumph o'er the world:
For who can help, or who can save besides?
Does not the deep grow calm, and the rude north
Be hush'd at his command? through all his works,
Does not his servant Nature hear his voice?
Hear and obey: then what is impious man
That we shou'd fear him, when Heav'n owns our cause?
That Heav'n shall make my Aribert its care,
Shall to thy groans and sighings lend an ear,
And save thee in the moment of despair.

Ari. Oh thou hast touch'd me with the sacred theme,
And my cold heart is kindled at thy flame;
An active hope grows busy in my breast,
And something tells me we shall both be blest.
Like thine, my eyes the starry thrones pursue,
And Heaven disclos'd stands open to my view;
And see the guardian angels of the good,
Reclining soft on many a golden cloud,
To earth they seem their gentle heads to bow,
And pity what we suffer here below;

But

But oh ! to thee, thee most they seem to turn,
 Joy in thy joys, and for thy sorrows mourn :
 Thee, oh my love, their common care they make.
 Me to their kind protection too they take,
 And save me for my Ethelinda's sake.

*[Exit Seofrid and Ethelinda at one door;
 Aribert at the other.]*

ACT III. SCENE I.

Enter SEOFRID.

SEOFRID.

WHAT is the boasted majesty of kings,
 Their godlike greatness, if their fate depend
 Upon that meanest of their passions, Love ?
 The pile their warlike fathers toil'd to raise,
 To raise a monument of deathless fame,
 A woman's hand o'erturns. The cedar thus,
 That lifted his aspiring head to heaven,
 Secure, and fearless of the sounding axe,
 Is made the prey of worms ; his root destroy'd,
 He sinks at once to earth, the mighty ruin,
 And triumph of a wretched insect's pow'r.
 Is there a remedy in human wisdom,
 My mind has left unsought, to help this evil ?
 I would preserve 'em both, the royal brothers ;
 But if their fates ordain that one must fall,
 Then let my master stand. This Christian woman—
 Ay, there the mischief comes—What are our gods,
 That they permit her to defy their pow'r ?
 But that's not much, let their priests look to that.
 Were she but well remov'd—But then the king—
 Why, absence, business, or another face,
 A thousand things may cure him—wou'd 'twere done,
 And my head safe—That ! let me look to that—
 But see, the husband comes—Ha, not ill thought ;
 It shal be try'd at least.—

Enter

Enter ARIBERT.

Ari. Still to this place

My heart inclines, still hither turn my eyes,
Hither my feet unbidden find their way.
Like a fond mother from her dying babe
Forc'd by officious friends and servants care,
I linger at the door, and wish to know,
Yet dread to hear the fate of what I love.
Oh, Seofrid, dost thou not wonder much,
And pity my weak temper, when thou seest me
Thus in a moment chang'd from hot to cold,
My active fancy glowing now with hopes,
Anon thus drooping; death in my pale visage,
My heart, and my chill veins, all freezing with despair?

Seof. I bear an equal portion of your sorrows,
Your fears too, all are mine. And oh, my Prince,
I would partake your hopes; but my cold age,
Still apt to doubt the worst——

Ari. What dost thou doubt?

Seof. Nay, nothing worse than what we both have
fear'd.

Ari. How! Nothing!——Speak thy fear.

Seof. Why——nothing new.

The King——that's all.

Ari. The King! Oh, that's too much!
And yet——yet there is more, I read it plain
In thy dark sullen visage——like a storm
That gathers black upon the frowning sky,
And grumbles in the wind——But let it come,
Let the whole tempest burst upon my head,
Let the fierce lightning blast, the thunder rive me;
For oh 'tis sure the fear of what may come
Does far transcend the pain.

Seof. You fear too soon,
And fancy drives you much too fiercely on.
I do not say that what may happen, will:
Chance often mocks what wisely we foresee.
Besides, the ruling gods are over all,
And order as they please their world below.
The King, 'tis true, is noble——but impetuous;
And love, or call it by the coarser name,

Lust,

Lust, is, of all the frailties of our nature,
 What most we ought to fear ; the headstrong beast
 Rushes along, impatient for the course,
 Nor hears the rider's call, nor feels the rein.

Ari. What wouldst thou have me think ?

Seof. Think of the worst,
 Your better fortune will arrive more welcome.
 'To speak then with that openness of heart
 That should deserve your trust, I have my fears.
 What if at some dead hour of night, the King
 Intend a visit to your weeping Princess ?

Ari. Ha !——

Seof. He may go, 'tis true, with a fair purpose.
 Suppose her sunk into a downy slumber,
 Her beating heart just tir'd, and gone to rest ;
 Methinks I see her on her couch repos'd,
 The lovely, helpless, sweet unguarded innocence ;
 With gentle heavings rise her snowy breasts,
 Soft steals the balmy breath, the rosy hue
 Glows on her cheek, a deep vermilion dyes
 Her dewy lip, while peace and smiling joy
 Sit hush'd and silent on the sleeping fair.
 Then think what thoughts invade the gazing King ;
 Catch'd with the sudden flame at once he burns,
 At once he flies resistless on his prey.
 Waking she starts distracted with the fright,
 To Aribert's lov'd name in vain she flies ;
 Shrieking she calls her absent lord in vain.
 The King, possess'd of all his furious will——

Ari. First sink the tyrant ravisher to hell !
 Seize him, ye fiends !—first perish thou and I !
 Let us not live to hear of so much horror ;
 The cursed deed will turn me savage, wild,
 Blot every thought of nature from my soul.
 A brother !—I will rush and tear his breast,
 Be drunk with gushing blood, and glut my vengeance
 With his incestuous heart.

Seof. It is but just
 You should be mov'd, for sure the thought is dreadful.
 But keep this swelling indignation down,
 And let your cooler reason now prevail ;
 That may perhaps find out some means of safety.

Ari. Talk'st thou of safety :— we may talk of Heav'n,
May gaze with rapture on yon starry regions ;
But who shall lend us wings to reach their height ?
Impossible ! ———

Seof. There is a way yet left,
And only one.

Ari. Ha ! speak ———

Seof. Her sudden flight.

Ari. Oh ! by what friendly means ? be swift to answer,

Nor waste the precious minutes with delay.

Seof. The King, now absent from the palace, seems
To yield a fair occasion for your wishes ;
A private postern opens to my gardens,
Thro' which the beauteous captive might remove,
'Till night, and a disguise shall farther aid her,
To fly with safety to the Britons' camp.
'Tis true, one danger I might well object ———

Ari. Oh ! do not, do not blast the springing hopes
Which thy kind hand has planted in my soul.
If there be danger, turn it all on me.
Let my devoted head ———

Seof. Nay ! ——— 'tis not much,
'Tis but my life ; and I will gladly give it,
To buy your peace of mind.

Ari. Alas ! what mean'st thou ?

Seof. Does it not follow plain ? shall not the King
Turn all his rage upon this hoary head ?
Shall not all arts of cruelty be try'd,
To find out tortures equal to my falsehood ?
Imagine you behold me bound and scourg'd,
My aged muscles harrow'd up with whips ;
Or hear me groaning on the rending rack,
Groaning and screaming with the sharpest sense
Of piercing pain ; or see me gash'd with knives,
And scar'd with burning steel, 'till the scorched marrow
Fries in the bones, and shrinking sinews start,
A smeary foam works o'er my grinding jaws,
And utmost anguish shakes my lab'ring frame :
For thus it must be.

Ari. Oh ! my friend ! my father !
It must not be, it never can, it sha' not.

Wouldst thou be kind, and save my Ethelinda,
 Leave me to answer all my brother's fury.
 The crime, the falsehood shall be all my own.

Secf. Just to my wish.

[*Aside.*

Ari. Thou shalt accuse me to him.

Thou know'st his own admittance gave me entrance:
 Swear that I stole her, that I forc'd her from thee;
 Frame with thy utmost skill some artful tale,
 And I'll avow it all.

Secf. Then have you thought
 Upon the danger, Sir?

Ari. Oh, there is none,
 Can be no danger, while my love is safe.

Secf. Methinks indeed it lessens to my view.
 When the first violence of rage is over,
 The fondness of a brother will return,
 And plead your cause with nature in his heart:
 You will, you must be false; and yet 'tis hard,
 And grieves me much I should accuse you to him.

Ari. 'Tis that must cover the design. But fly,
 Lose not a minute's time.

Haste to remove her from this cursed place;
 My faithful Oswald shall at night attend thee,
 And help to guard her to the British camp;
 Thou know'st that I not far.

Secf. Too near I know it.

[*Aside.*

Ari. She has a brother there, the noble Lucius,
 A gallant youth, and dear to brave Ambrosius;
 To his kind care resign thy beauteous charge.

Secf. This instant I obey you.

[*Going.*

Ari. Half my fears

Are over now——

Secf. One thing I had forgot.
 It will import us much that you should seem
 Inclined to meet the love of haughty Rodogune:
 'Twill cost you but a little courtly flattery,
 A kind respectful look, join'd with a sigh,
 A few soft tender words, that mean just nothing,
 Yet win most women's hearts. But see she comes:
 Constrain your temper, Sir; be false, and meet her
 With her own sex's arts; pursue your task,

And

And doubt not all shall prosper to your wish.

[Exit Seofrid.

ARIBERT *solus.*

Ari. She comes indeed ! Now where shall I begin,
How shall I teach my tongue to frame a language
So different from my heart ? Oh, Ethelinda !
My heart was made to fit and pair with thine,
Simple and plain, and fraught with artless tenderness ;
Form'd to receive one love, and only one,
But pleas'd and proud, and dearly fond of that,
It knows not what there can be in variety,
And would not if it could

Enter RODOGUNE.

Rod. Why do I stay,
Why linger thus within this hated place,
Where ev'ry object shocks my loathing eyes,
And calls my injur'd glory to remembrance ?
The King !—the wretch ! but wherefore did I name him !
Find out, my soul, in thy rich store of thought,
Somewhat more great, more worthy of thyself ;
Or let the mimic fancy shew its art,
And paint some pleasing image to delight me.
Let beauty mix with Majesty and youth ;
Let manly grace be temper'd well with softness ;
Let love, the god himself, adorn the work,
And I will call the charming phantom, Aribert.
Oh, Venus !—whither—whither would I wander ?
Be hush'd, my tongue—ye gods !—'tis he himself—

[Seeing Aribert.

Ari. When, fairest Princess, you avoid our court,
And lonely thus from the full pomp retire,
Love and the Graces follow to your solitude ;
They crowd to form the shining circle round you,
And all the train seems yours ; while purple majesty,
And all those outward shews which we call greatness,
Languish and droop, seem empty and forsaken,
And draw the wond'ring gazer's eyes no more.

Rod. The courtier's art is meanly known in Britain,
If yours present their service, and their vows,
At any shrine but where their master kneels.

You know your brother pays not his to me,
Nor would I that he should.

Ari. The hearts of kings
Are plac'd, 'tis true, beyond their subjects search;
Yet might I judge by Love's or Reason's rules,
Where shall my brother find on earth a beauty,
Like what I now behold?

Rod. That you can flatter,
Is common to your sex; you say indeed
We women love it—and perhaps we do.
Fools that we are, we know that you deceive us,
And yet, as if the fraud were pleasing to us,
And our undoing joy—still you go on,
And still we hear you—But, to change the theme,
I'll find a fitter for you than my beauty——

Ari. Then let it be the love of royal Hengist.

Rod. The King, your brother, could not chuse an ad-
vocate

Whom I would sooner hear on any subject,
'Bating that only one, his love, than you;
Tho' you perhaps (for some have wond'rous arts)
Could soften the harsh sound. The string that jars,
When rudely touch'd ungrateful to the sense,
With pleasure feels the master's flying fingers,
Swells into harmony, and charms the hearers.

Ari. Then hear me speak of love——

Rod. But not of his.

Ari. 'Tis true I should not grace the story much;
Rude and unskilful in the moving passion,
I should not paint its flames with equal warmth;
Strength, life, and glowing colours would be wanting,
And languid nature speak the work imperfect.

Rod. Then haply yet your breast remains untouch'd;
Tho' that seems strange: you've seen the court of Bri-
tain;

There, as I oft have heard, imperial beauty
Reigns in its native throne, like light in Heav'n;
While all the fair ones of the neighb'ring world,
With second lustre meanly seem to shine,
The faint reflections of the glory there.

Ari. If e'er my heart inclines to thoughts of love,
Methinks I should not (though perhaps I err)

Expect

Expect to meet the gentle passion join'd
With pomp and greatness : courts may boast of beauty,
But love is seldom found to dwell amongst 'em.

Rod. Then courts are wretched.

Ari. So they seem to love.

From pride, from wealth, from business, and from pow'r,
Loathing he flies, and seeks the peaceful village ;
He seeks the cottage in the tufted grove,
The russet fallows, and the verdant lawns,
The clear cool brook, and the deep woody glade,
Bright winter fires, and sunnier ev'ning suns ;
These he prefers to gilded roofs and crowns ;
Here he delights to pair the constant swain
With the sweet, unaffected, yielding maid ;
Here is his empire, here his choice to reign ;
Here, where he dwells with Innocence and Truth.

Rod. To minds which know no better, these are joys ;
But princes, sure, are born with nobler thoughts.
Love is in them a flame that mounts to heaven,
And seeks its source divine, and kindred stars ;
That urges on the mortal man to dare,
Kindles the vast desires of glory in him,
And makes Ambition's sacred fires burn bright.
Nor you, howe'er your tongue disguise your heart ;
Have meaner hopes than these.

Ari. Mine have been still

Match'd with my birth ; a younger brother's hopes.

Rod. Nay, more ; methinks I read your future greatness ;

And, like some bard inspir'd, I could foretell
What wond'rous things our gods reserve for you.
Perhaps, ev'n now, your better stars are join'd ;
Auspicious love and fortune now conspire,
At once to crown you, and bestow that greatness,
Which partial Nature at your birth denied.

Enter the KING, Guards, and other Attendants.

King. She must, she shall be found, though she be sunk
Deep to the centre, though eternal Night
Spread wide her sable wing to shade her beauties,
And shut me from her sight. But say, thou traitor,
Thou that hast made the name of friendship vile,

And broke the bonds of duty and of nature,
Where hast thou hid thy theft?—So young, so false!—
Have I not been a father to thy youth,
And lov'd thee with a more than brother's love?
And am I thus repaid?—But bring her forth,
Or by our gods thou diest.

Rod. What means this rage?

[*Aside.*

Ari. Then briefly thus: You are my king and brother,
The names which I most reverence on earth,
And fear offending most. Yet to defend
My honour and my love from violation,
O'er ev'ry bar resolute will I rush,
And, in despite of proud tyrannic pow'r,
Seize and assert my right!

King. What, thine! thy right!
Riddles and tales.

Ari. Mine by the dearest tie,
By holy marriage mine, she is my wife.

Rod. Racks, tortures, madness, seize me! oh confusion!

[*Aside.*

Ari. I see thy heart swells, and thy flaming visage
Reddens with rage at this unwelcome truth;
But since I know my Ethelinda's safe,
I have but little care of what may happen.
To-morrow may be Heaven's—or yours to take.
If this day be my last, why farewell life;
I hold it well bestow'd, for her I love.

Rod. May sorrow, shame, and sickness overtake her,
And all her beauties, like my hopes, be blasted! [*Aside.*

King. So brave! but I shall find the means to tame you,
To make thee curse thy folly, curse thy love,
And to the dreadful gods who reign beneath,
Devote thy fatal bride. She is a Christian:
Remember that, fond boy, and then remember
That sacred vow, which, perjur'd as thou art,
Prostrate at Woden's altar, and invoking,
With solemn Runic rites, our country's gods,
Thou mad'st in presence of our royal father.

Ari. Yes, I remember well the impious oath,
Hardly extorted from my trembling youth;
When burning with misguided zeal, the King
Compell'd my knee to bend before his gods,

And

And forc'd us both to swear to what we knew not.

King. Now, by the honours of the Saxon race,
A long and venerable line of heroes,
I swear thou art abandon'd, lost to honour,
And fall'n from every great and godlike thought.
Some whining coward priest has wrought upon thee,
And drawn thee from our brave forefathers' faith,
Falls to our gods, as to thy King and brother.

Ari. 'Tis much beneath my courage and my truth,
To borrow any mean disguise from false hood.
No — 'tis my glory that the Christian light
Has dawn'd, like day, upon my darker mind,
And taught my soul the noblest use of reason;
Taught her to soar aloft, to search, to know,
That vast eternal Fountain of her being;
Then, warm with indignation, to despise
The things you call our country's gods, to scorn,
And trample on their ignominious altars.

King. 'Tis well, Sir,—impious boy!—Ye Saxon gods,
And thou, oh royal Hengist, whose dread will,
And injur'd majesty I now assert,
Hear, and be present to my justice, hear me,
While thus I vow to your offended deities
This traitor's life; he dies, nor ought on earth
Saves his devoted head. One to the priests:

[*To the attendants.*]

Bid 'em be swift, and dress their bloody altars
With every circumstance of tragic pomp;
To day a royal victim bleeds upon 'em.
Rich shall the smoke and steaming gore ascend,
To glut the vengeance of our angry gods.

Rod. At once ten thousand racking passions tear me,
And my heart heaves as it would burst my bosom.
Oh can I, can I hear him doom'd to death,
Nor stir, nor breathe one single sound to save him?
It wo'n't be—and my fierce haughty soul,
Whate'er she suffers, still disdains to bend,
To sue to the curs'd, hated, tyrant King.
Oh love! oh glory!—Would'st thou die thus tamely?

[*To Aribert.*]

Is life so small a thing, so mean a boon,
As is not worth the asking?—Thou art silent!

Wilt

Wilt thou not plead for life?—Entreat the tyrant,
And waken Nature in his iron heart.

Ari. Life has so little in it good or pleasing,
That since it seems not worth a brother's care,
'Tis hardly worth my asking.

King. Seize him, guards,
And bear him to his fate.

[*Guards seize Aribert.*]

Rod. Yet Hengist, know,
If thou shalt dare to touch his precious life,
Know that the gods and Rodogune prepare
The sharpest scourges of vindictive war.
Fly where thou wilt, the sword shall still pursue
With vengeance, to a brother's murder due.
Driven out from man, and mark'd for public scorn,
Thy ravish'd scepter vainly shalt thou mourn.
And when at length thy wretched life shall cease,
When in the silent grave thou hop'st for peace;
Think not the grave shall hide thy hated head!
Still, still I will pursue thy fleeting shade;
I curs'd thee living, and will plague thee dead.

[*Exit Rodogune.*]

King. On to the temple with him; let her rave,
And prophesy ten thousand thousand horrors;
I could join with her now, and bid 'em come;
They fit the present fury of my soul.
The stings of love and rage are fix'd within,
And drive me on to madness. Earthquakes, whirlwinds,
A general wreck of nature now would please me:
For, oh! not all the driving wintry war,
When the storm groans and bellows from afar,
When thro' the gloom the glancing lightnings fly,
Heavy the rattling thunders roll on high,
And seas and earth mix with the dusky sky;
Not all those warring elements we fear,
Are equal to the inborn tempest here;
Fierce as the thoughts which mortal man controul,
When Love and Rage contend, and tear the lab'ring
soul.

[*Exeunt.*]

A C T

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The SCENE is a Temple adorn'd according to the superstition of the ancient Saxons; in the middle are placed their three principal idols, Thor, Woden, and Freya.

Music is heard at a distance, as of the priests preparing for the sacrifice. Then enter ARIBERT.

ARIBERT.

ALL night the bloody priests, a dreadful band,
Have watch'd intent upon their horrid rites,
With many a dire and execrable pray'r,
Calling the fiends beneath, the fallen dæmons,
That dwell in darkness deep, and foes to man,
Delight in reeking streams of human gore.
Now huddled on a heap, they murmur'd hoarse,
And hissing, whisper'd round their mytic charms;
And now, as if by sudden madness struck,
With screamings thrill they thook the vaulted roof,
And vex'd the still, the silent, solemn midnight.
Such sure, in everlasting flames below,
Such are the groans of poor lamenting ghosts,
And such the howlings of the last despair.
Anon to sounds of woe, and magic strings,
They danc'd in wild fantastick measures round;
Then all at once they bent their ghastly visages
On me, and yelling, thrice they call'd out, Aribert!
I have endur'd their horrors——And, at length,
See! the night wears away, and cheerful morn,
All sweet and fresh, spreads from the rosy east;
Fair Nature seems reviv'd, and ev'n my heart
Sits light and jocund at the day's return,
And fearless waits an end of all its sufferings.

Enter one of the Guards, he delivers a letter to ARIBERT.

Guard. From Oswald this, on peril of my life
I have engag'd to render to your hands.

[Exit.
Ari.

Ari. reads.] "Seofrid has been just to his word; he
"has deliver'd the fair Ethelinda to my charge: we
"have happily pass'd all the guards, and hope in two
"hours to reach the Britons camp.

"From your faithful Oswald."

Then thou hast nothing left on earth, my soul,
Worthy thy further care. Why do I stay,
Why linger then, and want my heav'n so long?
To live is to continue to be wretched,
And robs me of a great and glorious death.

Enter RODOGUNE with an OFFICER: he speaks to her entering.

Off. Thus Offa to his beauteous sister sends:
Depend upon a brother's love and care,
To further all you wish.

Rod. 'Tis well! Be near, *[Exit Officer.]*
And wait my farther order. See! my heart,
See there thy dearest choice, thy fond desire,
See with how clear a brow, what cheerful grace,
With all his native sweetness, undisturb'd,
The noble youth attends his harder fate.
I came to join my friendly grief with yours,

[To Aribert:]

To curse your tyrant brother, and deplore
Your youthful hopes, thus all untimely blasted!
But you I see, have learn'd to scorn your danger;
You wear a face of triumph, not of mourning:
Has death so little in it?

Ari. Oh! 'tis nothing,
To minds that weigh it well: the vulgar fear it,
And yet they know not why. Since never any
Did from that dark and doubtful land as yet
Turn back again, to tell us 'tis a pain.
To me it seems like a long withal for happiness,
Beyond what ev'n our expectation paints;
'Tis comfort to the soul, 'tis peace, 'tis rest;
It comes like slumber to the sick man's eyes.
Burning and restless with a fever's rage,
All night he tosses on his weary bed:
He tells the tedious minutes as they pass,

And

And turns, and turns, and seeks for ease in vain :
But if, at morning's dawn, sweet sleep falls on him,
Think with what pleasure he resigns his senses,
Sinks to his pillow, and forgets his pain.

Rod. Perhaps it may be such a state of indolence ;
But sure the active soul should therefore fear it.
The gods have dealt unjustly with their creatures,
If barely they bestow a wretched being,
And scatter not some pleasures with the pain,
To make it worth their keeping. Is there nothing
Could make you wish to live ?

Ari. Oh ! yes, there is ;
There is a blessing I could wish to live for,
To live, for years, for ages to enjoy it ;
But far, alas ! divided from my arms,
It leaves the world a wilderness before me,
With nothing worth desiring.

Rod. Dull and cold !
Or cold at least to me, dull, dull indifference. [*Aside.*
What if some pitying Pow'r look down from Heav'n,
And kindly vindicate your afflicted fortunes !
What if it send some unexpected aid,
Some generous heart, and some prevailing hand,
Willing to save, and mighty to defend,
Who from the gloomy confines of the grave,
Timely shall snatch, shall bring you back to life,
And raise you up to empire and to love ?

Ari. The wretched have few friends, at least on
earth :

Then what have I to hope ?

Rod. Hope every thing.

Hope all that merit, such as yours, may claim,
Such as commands the world, exacts their homage,
And makes ev'n all the good and brave your friends.

Ari. And can you then vouchsafe to flatter misery ?
To reach so fall'n, to toss a thing as I am,
With the sweet breath of praise ! So pious virgins
Rob the whole spring to make their garlands fine,
Then hang 'em on a tenebrous marble tomb.

Rod. A burning purple flushes o'er my face,
And shame torments my tongue, or I would say,
That I——oh Aribert !——I am thy friend.

Yet

Yet wherefore should I blush to own the thought?
For who——who would not be the friend of Aribert?

Ari. Why is this wond'rous goodness lost on me?
Why is this bounty lavish'd on a bankrupt,
Who has not left another hour of life
To pay the mighty debt?

Rod. Oh! let me yet,
Yet add to it, and swell the sum yet higher;
Nor doubt but Fate shall find the means to pay it.
Know then that I have pass'd this live long night
Sleepless and anxious, with my cares for thee;
The gods have sure approv'd the pious thought,
And crown'd it with success. Since I have gain'd
Alfred, the chief of mighty Woden's priests,
To find a certain way for thy escape.
One of the sacred habits is at hand,
Prepar'd for thy disguise; the holy man
Attends to guide thee to my brother's camp:
Myself—Oh, yet lie still, my beating heart!— [*Aside.*
Whatever dangers chance, myself will be
The partner and the guardian of thy flight.

Ari. Now what return to make—Oh, let me sink,
With all these warring thoughts together in me,
Blushing to earth, and hide the vast confusion. [*Aside.*

Rod. Ye gods! he answers not, but hangs his head
In sullen silence: see! he turns away,
And bends his gloomy visage to the earth.
To what am I betray'd! Oh shame, dishonour!
And more than woman's weakness! he has seen me,
Seen my fond heart, and scorns the easy prize.
Blast me, ye lightnings, strike me to the centre,
Drive, drive me down, down to the depths beneath!
Let me not live, nor think——let me not think,
For I have been despis'd——Ten thousand thousand,
And yet ten thousand curses!—— Oh my folly!——

Ari. Thus let me fall, thus lowly to the earth,
[*Kneeling.*

In humble adoration of your goodness;
Thus with my latest accents breathe your name,
And bless you ere I die. Oh, Rocio, my
Fair royal maid! to thee be all thy wishes,

Content and everlasting peace dwell with thee'
And every joy be thine ; nor let one thought
Of this ungrateful, this unhappy Aribert
Remain behind, to call a sudden sigh,
Or stain thee with a tear ! Behold I go,
Doom'd by eternal fate, to my long rest ;
Then let my name too die, sink to oblivion,
And sleep in silence with me in the grave.

Red. Dost thou not wish to live ?

Ari. I cannot.

Red. Why ?

Behold, I give thee life.

Ari. And therefore — oh !

Therefore I cannot take it. I dare die,
But dare not be oblig'd. I dare not owe
What I can never render back.

Red. Confusion !

Is then the blessing, life, become a curse,
When offer'd to thee by my baleful hand ?

Ari. Oh, no ! for you are all that's good and gracious ;

Nature, that makes your sex the joy of ours,
Made you the pride of both ; she gave you sweetness,
So mix'd with strength, with majesty so rais'd,
To make the willing world confess your empire,
And love, while they obey. Nor stay'd she there,
But to the body fitted to the mind,
As each were fashion'd singly to excel,
As if so fair a form disdain'd to harbour
A soul less great, and that great soul could find
Nothing so like the heav'n from whence it came,
As that fair form to dwell in.

Red. Soothing sounds !

Delightful flattery from him we love ? —

[*Aside.*]

But what are these to my impatient hopes !

Ari. Yet wherefore should this mighty mass of wealth
Be vainly plac'd before my wond'ring eyes,
Since I must ne'er possess it, since my heart,
Once giv'n, can ne'er return, can know no name
But Ethelinda, only Ethelinda
Fix'd to its choice, and obstinately constant,
It listens not to any other call.

So rigid hermits, that forsake the world,
Are deaf to glory, greatness, pomps and pleasures;
Severe in zeal, and insolently pious,
They let attending princes vainly wait,
Knock at their cells, and lure 'em forth in vain.

Red. How is she form'd? with what superior grace,
This rival of my love? What envious god,
In scorn of Nature's wretched works below,
Improv'd and made her more than half divine?
How has he taught her lips to breathe ambrosia?
How dy'd her blushes with the morning's red,
And cloth'd her with the fairest beams of light,
To make her shine beyond me?

Ari. Spare the theme.

Red. But then her mind! Ye gods, which of you all
Could make that great, and fit to rival mine?
What more than heavenly fire informs the mass?
Has she a soul can dare beyond our sex,
Beyond ev'n man himself, can dare like mine?
Can she resolve to bear the secret stings
Of shame and conscious pride, distracting rage,
And all the deadly pangs of love despis'd?
Oh, no! she cannot, Nature cannot bear it; [*Weeping.*
It sinks ev'n me, the torrent drives me down;
The native greatness of my spirit fails,
Thus melts, and thus runs gushing thro' my eyes;
The floods of sorrow drown my dying voice,
And I can only call thee—cruel Aribert!

Ari. Oh thou, just Heav'n, if mortal man may dare
To look into thy great decrees, thy fate,
Were it not better I had never been,
Than thus to bring affliction and misfortune,
Thus curse what thou hadst made so good and fair?

Red. But see! the King and cruel priests appear.
Nor can I save thee now. Thou hast thy wish;

[*To Aribert.*

But what remains for me? my heart beats fast,
And swells impatient at the tyrant's sight.
My blood, erewhile at ebb, now flows again,
And with new rage I burn. Since love is lost,
Come thou, Revenge, succeed thou to my bosom,
And reign in all my soul. Yes, I will find her,

This

This fatal she, for whom I am despis'd.
 Look that she be your masterpiece, ye gods;
 Let each celestial hand some grace impart,
 To this rare pattern of your forming art;
 Such may she be, my jealous rage to move,
 Such as you never made till now, to prove
 A victim worthy my offended love. [Exit. Rod.]

Enter at the other door the KING, Priests, Guards, and other Attendants.

King. Hast thou bethought thee yet, perfidious boy!
 Wilt thou yet render back thy theft! Consider,
 The precipice is just beneath thy feet;
 'Tis but a moment, and I push thee off,
 To plunge for ever in eternal darkness,
 Something like Nature has been busy here,
 And made a struggle for thee in my soul;
 Restore my love, and be again my brother.

Ari. Rage, and the violence of lawless passion,
 Have blinded your clear reason; wherefore else
 This frantic wild demand! What! should I yield,
 Give up my love, my wife, my Ethelinda,
 To an incestuous brother's dire embrace?
 Oh, horror!——But, to bar the impious thought,
 Know——Heav'n and brave Ambrosius are her guard:
 Ere this her flight has reach'd the Britons camp,
 And found her safety there.

King. Fled to the Britons!
 Oh, most accursed traitor! Let her fly,
 Far as the early day-spring in the east,
 Or to the utmost ocean, where the sun
 Descends to other skies, and world is unknown;
 Ev'n thither shall my love take wing and follow,
 To seize the flying fair. The Britons!——Gods!
 Shall they with-hold her!——First, my arms shall shake
 Their island to the centre. But for thee,
 Think'st thou to awe me with that phantom, incest?
 Such empty names may fright thy coward soul;
 But know that mine disdains 'em. Bind him straight.

[To the Priests.

I wo'not lose another thought about thee. [To Ari.
 Begin the rites, and eye the hallow'd steel

Deep in his Christian blood. The gods demand him.

Ari. Why then, no more. But if we meet again,
As, when the day of great account shall come,
Perhaps we may, may'st thou find mercy there,
More than thou shew'st thy brother here. Farewell.

King. Farewell. To death with him, and end the dreamer

[*The Priests bind Aribert, and lead him to the altar, while the solemn music is playing.*]

Enter SEOFRID.

Seof. Haste, and break off your unauspicious rites ;
The instant dangers summon you away ;
Destruction threatens in our frightened streets,
And the gods call to arms.

King. What means the fear
That trembles in thy pale, thy haggard visage ?
Speak out, and ease this labour of thy soul.

Seof. Oh, fly, my Lord ; the torrent grows upon us,
And while I speak we're lost. Pierce Offa comes ;
From ev'ry part his crowding ensigns enter,
And this way waving bend. With idle arms
Your soldiers careless stand, and bid 'em pass ;
Some join, but all refuse to arm against 'em ;
They call 'em friends, companions, and their country-
men.

A chosen band, led by the haughty princess,
Imperious Rodogune, move swiftly hither
To intercept your passage to the palace.
That only strength is left, then fly to reach it.

King. Curs'd chance ! But haste, dispatch that traitor
straight :

They sha'not bar my vengeance.

Seof. Sacred Sir,
Think only on your safety. For the Prince,
Your crown, but more your love, a thousand reasons,
All urge you to defer his fate ; time presses,
Or I could speak 'em plain.

King. Then hear me, Priest,
I give him to thy charge.

Seof. They come, my Lord,

[*Shout.*
King]

King. Look to him well; for, by yon dreadful altars,
Thy life shall pay for his, if he escape:
First kill him, plunge thy poniard in his bosom,
And see thy King reveng'd.

[*Exeunt King, Scot. Guards, and Attendants.*]

Priest. Be cheer'd, my Lord,
Nor keep one doubt of me; I am your slave.
The King is fled, and with him all your dangers.
Fate has reserv'd you for some glorious purpose;
And see, your guardian goddess comes to save you,
To break your bonds, and make you ever happy.

Enter RODOGUNE, *Soldiers, and other Attendants.*

Rod. Well have our arms prevail'd; behold, he lives,
Ungreatful as he is, by me he lives.
Do I not come with too officious haste, [*To Ari.*]
Once more to press the burden, life, upon you?
To offer, with an idiot's importunity,
The nauseous benefit you scorn'd before?

Ari. If I refus'd the blessing from your hands,
Think it not rudely done with sullen pride;
Since life and you are two of Heav'n's best gifts,
Yet both should be receiv'd, both kept with honour.

Rod. However, live——Yes, I will bid thee live,
No matter what ensues. Fly far away,
Forget me, blot my name from thy remembrance,
And think thou ow'st me nothing.—What! in bonds!
Well was the task reserv'd for me. But thus
I break thy chain——Would I could break my own.

[*Aside.*]

Enter an OFFICER.

Off. A party of our horse, that late went forth
To mark the order of the Britons camp,
Met in their course some servants of the King:
For so they call'd themselves—Ours—'n traitors,
And would have seiz'd, as flying to the sea.
After a sharp resistance some escap'd:
The rest, for so your princely brother wills,
Without, attend your order.

Rod. Let him enter.
A woman!

Enter ETHELINDA, and two Attendants guarded.

Eth. Is there then an end of sorrows !

[*Running to Ari.*

Has then that cruel chance that long pursu'd me,
That vex'd me with her various malice long,
Been kind at last, and blest'd me to my wish,
Let all be over more within thy faithful arms !

Eth. Oh my throbbing heart ! oh fatal meeting !

Eth. Why droops my love, my Lord, my Aribert ?
Why dost thou sigh and press me ? and, oh ! wherefore,
Wherefore these tears that stain thy manly visage ?
They told me heav'n had stoove for thy deliverance,
Had rais'd thee up some kind, some great preserver,
To save thee from thy cruel brother's hand.
Why therefore dost thou mourn, when thou art blest'd ?
Or does some new affliction wound thee ? say :
Perhaps I am the cause.

Red. By all the tortures,
The pangs that rend my groaning breast, 'tis she,
My curs'd, my happy rival. See the Syren,
See how with eager eyes he drinks her charms,
Mark how he listens to her sweet allurements ;
She winds herself about his easy heart,
And melts him with her soft enchanting tongue.

Eth. Wot't thou not answer yet ?

Ari. Oh Ethelinda !

Why art thou here ? Is this the Britons camp ?
Is Lucius here ? hast thou a brother here,
To guard thy helpless innocence from wrong ?

Eth. Have I not thee ?

Ari. Me !——what can I do for thee ?

For we are wretched both.

Red. I'll doubt no more,

My jealous heart confesses her its foe,
And beats and rises, eager to oppose her ;
Nor shall she triumph o'er me. No, ye gods !
If I am doom'd by you to be a wretch,
She too shall suffer with me. Prince, you seem

[*To Aribert.*

To know this prisoner, whom the Saxon chiefs
Accuse of flying to our foes, the Britons.

However,

However, I will think more nobly of you,
Than to believe you conscious of the treason :
Nor can you grieve, if justice dooms her to
That fate she has deserv'd. Bear her to death.

[To the Guards.

Eth. Alas ! to death ! —What mean you ? Say by
what

Unknown, unwilling crime have I offended ?
To you, fair Princess, since 'tis you that judge me,
Till now this moment to my eyes first known,
To you I bend, to you I will appeal ; [Kneeling.
And learn my crime from you.

Ari. Learn it from me ;

I am thy crime, 'tis Aribert destroys thee.

Eth. if thou art my offence, I've sinn'd indeed,
Ev'n to a vast and numberless account ;
For from the time when I beheld thee first, [To Ari.
My soul has not one moment been without thee ;
Still hast thou been my wish, my constant thought,
Like light, the daily blessing of my eyes,
And the dear dream of all my sweetest slumbers.

Rod. Oh the distracting thought !

Eth. Nor will you think it [To Rodogune.

A crime to love, for that I love is true.
In your fair eyes I read your native goodness,
Haply some noble youth shall in your breast
Kindle the pure, the gentle flame, and prove
As dear to you, as Aribert to me :
Would it be just that you should die for loving ?
Think but on that, and I shall find your pity ;
For pity sure and mercy dwell with love.

Rod. Be dumb for ever, let the hand of death
Close thy bewitching eyes, and seal thy lips,
That thou may'st look and talk no more delusion.
For oh ! thy ev'ry glance, each sound shoots thro' me,
And kills my very heart. Hence, bear her hence.
My peace is lost for ever—but she dies—

Ari. Oh hold ! for——

Rod. Wherefore dost thou catch my garments ?
Thou that hast set me on the rack ; com'st thou
To double all my pains, and with new terrors,
Dreadful, to shake my agonizing soul ?

Ari.

Ari. What shall I say to move thee?

Rod. Talk for ever,
Winds shall be still, and seas forget to roar,
The din of babbling crowds, and peopled cities,
All shall be hush'd as death, while thou art speaking,
For there is music in thy voice.

Ari. Then hear me;
With gentlest patience, with compassion hear me,
Thus while I fall before thee, grasp thee thus,
Thus with a bleeding heart, and streaming eyes,
Implore thee for my Ethelinda's life.

Rod. Tho' thou wert dearer to my doating eyes
Than all they knew besides, tho' I could hear thee
While ages past away; yet, by the gods,
If such there are, who rule o'er love and jealousy,
And swell our heaving breasts with mortal passions,
I swear the dies, my hated rival dies.

Ari. Then I have only one request to make,
Which sha not be deny'd; to share one fate,
And die with her I love.

Rod. Ungrateful wretch!
Yet I would make thy life my care——

Ari. No more:
Now I scorn life indeed. Tho' you had beauty,
More than the great Creator's bounteous hand
Bestow'd on all his various works together,
Tho' all ambition asks, the kingly purple,
Glory, and wealth, and pow'r, were yours to give;
Tho' length of days and health were in your hand,
And all were to be mine, yet I would chuse
To turn the gift with indignation back,
And rather fold my Ethelinda thus,
And sleep for ever with her in the grave.

Rod. Then take thy wish, and let both die together.
Yes, I will tear thee out from my remembrance,
And be at ease for ever.

Eth. Oh my love!
What can I pay thee back for all this truth?
What! but like thee, to triumph in my fate,
And think it more than life to die with thee.
Haste, then, ye virgins, break the tender turf,
And let your chaster hands prepare the bed,

Where

Where my dear Lord and I must rest together ;
 Then let the myrtle and the rose be strow'd,
 For 'tis my second better bridal day
 On my cold bosom let his head be laid,
 And look that none disturb us ;
 Till the last trumpet's sound break our long sleep,
 And calls us up to everlasting bliss.

Rod. Hence with 'em, take 'em, drive 'em from my
 sight.

The fatal pair——

[Exeunt Aribert and Ethelinda guarded.]

That look shall be my last.

I feel my soul impatient of its bondage,
 Disdaining this unworthy idle passion,
 And struggling to be free. Now, now it shoots,
 It tow'rs upon the wing to crowns and empire ;
 While love and Aribert, those meaner names,
 Are left far, far behind, and lost for ever.

So if by chance the eagle's noble offspring,

Ta'en in the nest, becomes some peasant's prize,
 Compell'd a while he bears his cage and chains,

And like a pris'ner with the clown remains ;

But when his plumes shoot forth, and pinions swell,

He quits the rustic, and his homely cell,

Breaks from his bonds, and in the face of day,

Full in the sun's bright beams he soars away ;

Delights thro' heav'n's wide pathless ways to go,

Plays with Jove's shafts, and grasps his dreadful bow,

Dwells with immortal gods, and scorns the world

below.

[Exeunt Rodogune and Attendants.]

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Palace.

Enter the KING and SEOFRID.

KING.

NO ! I will follow the fond chace no more ;
 No more pursue the flying phantom, glory ;
 But lay me down, and rest in fallen peace ;

Secure

Secure of all events to come, and careless
 If the gods guide the world by fate or fortune.
 Let them take back the worthless crown they gave,
 Since they refuse their better blessings to me.

Seof. If not to glory, yet awake to love:
 And tho' regardless of your royal state,
 Yet I've for Ethelinda, live to save her,
 Doom'd by the cruel Rodogune to die!
 Helpless and desolate methinks she stands,
 And calls you to her aid.

King. What! doom'd to die!
 Shall those dear glowing beauties then grow cold,
 Pale, stiff, and cold? nor shall I fold her once?
 Shall she not pant beneath my strong embrace,
 Swell to desire, and meet my furious joy?
 Shall she not breathe, and look, and sigh, and murmur,
 Till I am lost for ever, sunk in ecstasies,
 And bury'd in ten thousand thousand sweets?
 What! shall she die? No, by the god of arms,
 No—I will once more rouse me to the war,
 And snatch her from her fate.

Seof. Then hear the means
 By which the gods preserve your crown and love:
 Oswald, of all our Saxon chiefs the first,
 And nearest to your brother's heart, had drawn
 The chosen strength of all the British youth,
 Under the leading of the gallant Lucius,
 To save the Prince from your impending wrath.
 By secret marches they are near advanc'd,
 And meant this night to make their bold attempt.

King. How favours this my purpose?

Seof. Thus, my Lord.

I have prevail'd their force shall join with all
 Those faithful Saxons, who are still your subjects.
 Your foes, fierce Offa and his haughty sister,
 Secure and insolent with new successes,
 Despise your numbers, and inferior strength,
 And may this night with ease become your prey.
 Oswald attends without to learn your pleasure,
 And bear it to the valiant British chiefs.

King. The Britons! Gods!—the nation which I hate.
 That

That Oswald too!——The traitor still has been
 Avow'd the slave of Aribert, his creature,
 His bosom, fawning parasite——No matter;
 They serve the present purpose of my heart,
 And I will use 'em now. Taught by thy arts,
 I will look kindly on the wretch I loath,
 And smile on him I destine to destruction.
 Bid him approach.

[Exit Seofrid, and re-enter with Oswald.]

Seof. The valiant Oswald, Sir.

King. Your friend has spoke at large your bold design,
 Worthy your courage, and your princely friend.
 And howsoever the meddling hand of chance
 Has sown th' unlucky seeds of strife between us,
 Yet I have still a brother's part in Aribert.
 Nor shall my hand be slow to lead you on,
 'Till we have driv'n these haughty inmates forth,
 And independent fix'd that sov'reign right,
 Which our brave fathers fought to gain in Britain.

Osw. With honourable purpose are we come,
 With friendly greeting from the Britons King,
 And the fair offer of an equal peace.
 This only he demands; send back the troops
 Which late arriv'd with Ossa, now your foe,
 As well as his: and set your princely brother,
 With the fair Ethelinda, safe and free.
 These just conditions once confirm'd to Lucius,
 Ambrosius is the friend of royal Hengist.
 The Britons then shall join their arms with yours,
 To drive out these unhospitable guests,
 And leave you peaceful lord of fruitful Kent,
 The first possession of your warlike father.

King. In friendly part take we his proffer'd love.
 Bear this our signet to the gallant Lucius,

[Giving his ring to Oswald.]

Our bond and pledge of peace, which in full form
 We will confirm, soon as the present danger
 Is well remov'd, and better time allows
 Haste thou to join our valiant friends the Britons;
 My faithful Seofrid shall soon attend you,
 With full instructions for your private march,
 And means of entrance here; with the whole order

In which we mean t' attack the common foe.

Osw. I go, my Lord, and may the gods besfriend us.

[Exit.

[*The King looks after Oswald, then turns and walks two or three times hastily across the stage*

Seof. Ha! whence this sudden start! [*Aside.*] That wrathful frown,

Your eyes fierce glancing, and your changing visage,
Now pale as death, now purpled o'er with flame,
Give me to know your passions are at odds,
And your whole soul is up in arms within.

King. O thou hast read me right, hast seen me well;
To thee I have thrown off that mask I wore;
And now the secret workings of my brain
Stand all reveal'd to thee I tell thee, *Seofrid*,
There never was a medley of such thinking;
Ambition, hatred, mischief, and revenge,
Gather like clouds on clouds; and then anon,
Love, like a golden beam of light, shoots thro',
Smiles on the gloom, and my heart bounds with pleasure.
But 'tis no time to talk. To *Siwald* fly,
My foldier and my servant, often try'd;
Bid him draw out a hundred chosen horse,
And hold 'em ready by the night's first fall.
Let 'em be all of courage, well approv'd;
Such as dare follow wherefoe'er I lead,
Where'er this night, or fate, or love shall bear me.

Seof. I hasten to obey you. But alas!

Might your old man have leave to speak his fears—

King. I read thy care for me in all those tears;
But be not wise too much. Oft thou hast told me,
Love, is a base, unmanly, whining passion.
This night I mean to prove it, and forsake it.
I was, 'tis true, the slave of this soft folly,
And waited at an awful, abject distance,
Restrain'd by idle rules, which scornful beauty
And sullen honour dictate; but no more.
No! by our gods, I'll suffer it no more.

Seof. Where will this fury drive you.

King. To my heav'n,
To *Ethelinda's* arms. 'Tis very evening,
While the deluded Britons urge our loss,

And wreak my vengeance on the Saxon Offa,
 Amidst the first disorder of the fray,
 'Twill not be hard to seize the weeping fair ;
 And, while the fighting towls contend in vain,
 With all the wings the god of love can lend,
 To bear her far away

Seof. Ha ! ——— whither mean you
 To bend this rail (I fear) this fatal flight ?

King. Near where the Medway rolls her gentle waves,
 To meet the Thames in his imperial stream,
 Thou know'st I have a castle of such strength,
 As well may scorn the menace of a siege.
 Thither I mean to bear my lovely prize,
 And, in derelict of all the envious world,
 There riot in her arms. But break we off.
 Hasten to perform my orders ; and then follow,
 And share in all the fortunes of thy King. [*Exit King.*]

Manet SEOFRID.

Seof. Fools that we are ! to vex the lab'ring brain,
 And waste decaying nature thus with thought ;
 To keep the weary spirits waking still ;
 To goad and drive 'em in eternal rounds
 Of restless wracking care ; 'tis all in vain.
 Blind goddess Chance ! henceforth I follow thee:
 The politicians of the world may talk,
 May make a mighty bustle with their foresight,
 Their schemes and arts ; their wisdom is thy slave.
Exit Seofrid.

SCENE *changes to a Temple.*

Enter ARIBERT and ETHELINDA.

Pth. When this, the last of all our days of sorrow,
 Flies fast, and hastens to fulfil its course ;
 When the blest hour of death at length is near,
 Why dost thou mourn ? when that good time is come
 When we shall weep no more, but live for ever :
 In that dear place, where no misfortunes come ;

2

E

Where

Where age, and want, and sickness are not known,
 And where this wicked world shall cease from troubling;
 When thick descending angels crowd the air,
 And wait with crowns of glory to reward us;
 Why art thou sad, my love, my Lord, my Aribert?

Ari. It comes, indeed; the cruel moment comes,
 That must divide our faithful loves for ever.
 A few short minutes more, and both shall perish,
 Sink to the place where all things are forgotten.
 Our youth and fair affections shall be barren;
 Shall know no joys, which other lovers know,
 Shall leave no name behind us, no posterity,
 Only the sad remembrance of our woes,
 To draw a tear from each who reads our story.
 And dost thou ask me wherefore I am sad?

Eth. 'Tis hard indeed, 'tis very hard to part,
 Though my heart grieves to want its heav'n so long.
 Pants for its bliss, and sickens with delay;
 Yet I could be content to live for thee.
 Yet, I will own thy image stands before me,
 And intercepts my journey to the stars,
 Calls back the fervent breathings of my soul
 To earth and thee; with longing looks I turn,
 Forget my flight, and linger here below.

Ari. Is it decreed by heav'n's eternal will,
 That none shall pass the golden gates above,
 But those who sorrow here? Must we be wretched?
 Must we be drown'd in many floods of tears,
 To wash our deep, our inborn stains away,
 Or never see the saints, and taste their joys?

Eth. The great overruling author of our beings,
 Deals with his creature Man in various ways,
 Gracious and good in all. Some feel the rod,
 And own, like us, the father's chast'ning hand;
 Sev'n times, like gold, they pass the purging flame,
 And are at last refin'd: while gently some
 Tread all the paths of life without a rub,
 With honour, health, with friends and plenty blest'd,
 Their years roll round in innocence and ease.
 Hoary at length, and in a good old age,
 They go declining to the grave in peace,

And

And change their pleasures here for joys above.

Ari. To have so many blessings heap'd on me,
Transcends my wish. I ask'd but only thee.
Give me, I said, but life and Ethelinda;
Let us but run the common course together,
Grow kindly old in one another's arms,
And take us to thy mercy then, good Heav'n.
But Heav'n thought that too much.

Eth. If our dear hopes,
If what we value most on earth, our loves,
Are blasted thus by death's untimely hand;
If nothing good remains for us below,
So much the rather let us turn our thoughts
To seek beyond the stars our better portion;
That wondrous bliss which Heav'n reserves in store,
Well to reward us for our losses here;
That bliss which Heav'n, and only Heav'n can give,
Which shall be more to thee than Ethelinda,
And more to me—Oh vast excess of happiness!
Where shall my soul make room for more than Aribert?

Enter RODOGUNE and Attendants.

Rod. If, while she lives, still I am doom'd to suffer,
Why am I cruel to myself?—No more—
'Tis foolish pity—how secure of conquest
The soft enchantress looks? but be at peace;
Beat not, my heart, for she shall fall thy victim.
Appear, ye priests, ye dreadful holy men;
Ye ministers of the gods' wrath and mine,
Appear and seize your sacrifice, this Christian.
Bear her to death, and let her blood atone
For all the mischiefs of her eyes and tongue.

The SCENE draws, and discovers the inner part of the Temple. A fire is prepar'd on one of the altars; near it are plac'd a rack, knives, axes, and other instruments of torture; several priests attending as for a sacrifice.

Ari. See where death comes, array'd in all its terrors;

The rack, consuming flames, and wounding steel.
 Your cruel triumph had not been complete,
 Without this pomp of horror. Come, begin;
 Tear off my robes, and bind me to the rack;
 Stretch out my corded sinews, till they burst,
 And let your knives drink deep the flowing blood.
 You shall behold how a prince ought to die,
 And what a Christian dares to suffer.

[*The Guards seize Aribert and Ethelinda.*]

Off. Hold! —

The Prince's fate is yet deferr'd: the woman
 Is first ordain'd to suffer — Ere she fall
 A victim to our gods, she must kneel to 'em,
 Or prove the torture.

Eth. I disdain those gods.

Off. Bind her straight, and bear her to the rack.

Ari. What, her! — oh merciless!

Eth. Oh, stay me not, my love; with joy I go,
 To prove the bitter pains of death before thee,
 And lead thee on in the triumphant way.

Ari. And can my eyes endure it! to behold
 Thy tender body torn? these dear, soft arms,
 That oft have wreath'd their snowy folds about me,
 Distorted, bent, and broke with rending pain?
 Oh Rodogune! read, read in my full eyes,
 More than my tongue can speak, and spare my love. —

Rod. And couldst thou find no other name but that?
 Thy love! — oh fatal, curst, distracting sound!
 No, I will steel my heart against thy pray'r,
 And whisper to myself with fullen pleasure,
 The gods are just at length, and thou shalt feel
 Pains, such as I have known.

Ari. Let me but die,

Cut off this hated object from your sight —

Rod. Nor that — for know that I too can deny,
 And make thee mourn thy coldness and disdain.
 No more! I'll hear no more! I'll hear no more.

Ari. They bind her! see!

See with rude cords they strain her tender limbs,
 Till the red drops start from their swelling channels,

And

And with fresh crimson paint her dying paleness.
Oh all ye host of heav'n! ye saints and angels!

Eth. Oh, stay thy tears, and mourn no more for me;
Nor fear the weakness of my woman's soul,
For I am arm'd and equal to the combat.
In vain they lavish all their cruel arts,
And bind this feeble body here in vain;
The free, impassive soul mounts on the wing,
Beyond the reach of racks, and tort'ring flames,
And scorns their tyranny—Oh follow thou!
Be constant to the last, be fix'd, my Aribert.
'Tis but a short, short passage to the stars.
Oh follow thou! nor let me want thee long,
And search the blissful regions round in vain.

Enter an OFFICER.

Off. Arm, royal maid, and take to your defence:
The King with sudden fury falls forth,
And drives our utmost guards with foul confusion.

Rod. The King! what frenzy brings the madman on
Thus headlong to his fate?—But let him come,
His death shall fill my triumph:—wealth and honours,
The noblest, best reward, shall wait the man,
Whose lucky sword shall take his hated head.

Enter a second OFFICER, his sword drawn.

2 Off. Hengist is here; he bears down all before him:
The Britons too have join'd their arms to his,
And this way bend their force.

Rod. Fly to my brother, *[To her attendants.*
And call him to our aid.

[Shouts within, and clashing of swords.

King within.] Slave, give me way,
Or I will tear thy soul——

Sold. within.] You pass not here.

Serj. within.] What, know'st thou not the King?—
Oh, cursed villain!

Enter the KING wounded, SEOFRID, OSWALD, and Soldiers with their swords drawn. Oswald runs to Aribert.

Seof. Perdition on his hand—you bleed, my Lord!

King. My blood flows fast—What, can I languish now!
So near my wish—lend me thy arm, old Seofrid,
To bear me to her—ha! bound to the rack!
Merciless dogs—ye most pernicious slaves!
And stand ye stupid, haggard and amazed!
Fly swift as thought, and set her free this moment;
Or by my injur'd love, a name more sacred
Than all your fiction knows, your gods and you,
Your temples, altars, and your painted shrines,
Your holy trumpery shall blaze together.

[They unbind Ethelinda.]

Rod. 'Tis vain to rave and curse my fortune now.
Thou native greatness of my soul befriend me,
And help me now to bear it as I ought.

King. The feeble lamp of life shall lend its blaze,
To light me—thus far—only—and no farther.

[Falling at Ethelinda's feet.]

Yet I look up, and gaze on those bright eyes,
As if I hop'd to gather heat from thence,
Such as might feed the vital flame for ever.

Eth. Alas! you faint! your hasty breath comes short,
And the red stream runs gushing from your breast.
Call back your thoughts from each deluding passion,
And wing your parting soul for her last flight;
Call back your thoughts to all your former days,
To every unrepented act of evil;
And sadly deprecate the wrath divine.

King. Oh! my fair teacher, you advise in vain:
The gods and I have done with one another.
This night I meant to rival them in happiness.
Spight of my brother, and thy cruel coldness,
This night I meant t' have past within thy arms.

Eth. Oh! horror!

King. But 'tis gone: those envious gods
Have done their worst, and blasted all my hopes;

They

They have despoil'd me of my crown and life,
By a slave's hand—But I forgive 'em that.
Thee—they have robb'd me of my joys in the—
Have trod me down to wither in the grave.—

Scsf. My Master, and my King !

King. Old man, no more ;

I have not leisure for thy grief—Farewell—

Thou, Aribert—shalt live, and wear my crown :

Take it, and be as curs'd with it as I was.

But Ethelinda, she too shall be thine :

That—that's too much. This world has nothing in it

So good to give—the next may have—I know not—

[*The King dies.*]

Ari. There fled the fierce, untam'd, disdainful soul.

Turn thee from death, and rise, my gentle love ;

A day of comfort seems to dawn upon us,

And Heav'n at length is gracious to our wishes.

Eth. So numberless have been my daily fears,

And such the terror of my sleepless nights,

That still, methinks, I doubt th' uncertain happiness :

Though at the music of thy voice, I own,

My soul is hush'd, it sinks into a calm,

And takes sure omen of its peace from thee.

Osw. To end your doubts, your brother, the brave

Lucius,

[*To Ethelinda.*]

Will soon be here : ev'n now he sends me word,

Fierce Offa and the Saxons fly before him ;

The conqu'ring Britons fence you round from danger,

And peace and safety wait upon your loves.

Ari. Nor you, fair Princess, frown upon our happiness ;

Still shall my grateful heart retain your goodness,

And still be mindful of the life you gave.

Nor must you think yourself a prisoner here :

Where'er you shall appoint, a guard attends,

To wait you to your brother's camp with honour.

Rod. Yes, I will go ; fly, far as earth can bear me,
From thee, and from the face of man for ever.

Curs'd be your sex, the cause of all our sorrows ;

Curs'd be your looks, your tongues, and your false arts,

That cheat our eyes, and wound our easy hearts ;

Curs'd

Curs'd may you be for all the pains you give,
 And for the scanty pleasures we receive ;
 Curs'd be your brutal pow'r, your tyrant sway,
 By which you bend, and force us to obey.
 Oh, Nature ! partial goddess, let thy hand
 Be just for once, and equal the command ;
 Let woman once be mistress in her turn,
 Subdue mankind beneath her haughty scorn,
 And smile to see the proud oppressor mourn.

[Exit Rodogune.]

Ofw. The winds shall scatter all those idle curses
 Far, far away from you, while ev'ry blessing
 Attends to crown you. From your happy nuptials,
 From royal Aribert, of Saxon race,
 Join'd to the fairest of the British dames,
 Methinks I read the people's future happiness ;
 And Britain takes its pledge of peace from you.

Eth. Nor are those pious hopes of peace in vain ;
 Since I have often heard a holy sage,
 A venerable, old, and saint-like hermit,
 With visions often bless'd, and oft in thought
 Rapt to the highest, brightest seats above,
 Thus, with divine, prophetic knowledge fill'd,
 Disclose the wonders of the time to come.

Of royal race a British Queen shall rise,
 Great, gracious, pious, fortunate and wise :
 To distant lands she shall extend her name,
 And leave to latter times a mighty name :
 Tyrants shall fall, and faithless kings shall bleed,
 And groaning nations by her arms be freed.
 But chief this happy land her care shall prove,
 And find from her a more than mother's love.
 From hostile rage she shall preserve it free,
 Safe in the compass of her ambient sea :
 Though fam'd her arms in many a cruel fight,
 Yet most in peaceful arts she shall delight,
 And her chief glory shall be to UNITE.
 Picts Saxons, Angles, shall no more be known,
 But Briton be the noble name alone.
 With joy their ancient hate they shall forego,
 While Discord hides her baleful head below :

Mercy

Mercy, and truth, and right she shall maintain,
And ev'ry virtue crowd to grace her reign :
Auspicious Heav'n on all her days shall smile,
And with eternal UNION bless her British isle.

[*Exeunt omnes* *.

* This play, though not so often acted as some others of this Author's pieces, is far from falling short of any one of them in point of merit. The characters of Rodogune and Ethelinda, are very finely contrasted, as are also those of Hengist and Aribert ; the incidents are interesting ; the language occasionally spirited and tender, yet every where poetical ; and the catastrophe affecting and truly dramatic.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs OLDFIELD, who acted ETHELINDA.

*THE business of the day being now gone through,
I quit the saint, and am like one of you;
As well to look to, though not quite so good;
I bate in spirit, but keep my flesh and blood.
The moral of this play being rightly scann'd,
Is, he that leaves his own dear wife is damn'd.
I leave to you to make the application:
The doctrine, though a little out of fashion,
May be of use in this same sinful nation.
What think you of the matter? which of you
Would, for his spouse, like my true turtle do?
When wealth and beauty both at once importune,
Who would not leave his wife, to make his fortune?
To some, I know, it may appear but oddly,
That this place, of all others, should turn godly:
But what of that? since some good souls there are,
Would gladly be instructed any where;
Nor should you scorn the weakness of the teacher,
The wisest man is not the ablest preacher.
E'en we poor women have sometimes the pow'r,
Read as you are, and rich in learning's store,
To teach you men what you ne'er knew before.
To no enthusiastic rage we swell,
Nor foam, nor act Tom Cumbler out of zeal.
But tho' we don't pretend to inspiration,
Yet, like the prophets of a neighbour nation,
Our teaching chiefly lies in AGITATION.
Perhaps, indeed, such are your wandering brains,
Our Author might have spar'd his tragic pains;
By that you've sapp'd, and are set in for drinking,
Some fees or matters will employ your thinking:
With nuptial divine writ on each glass before ye,
You'll be but little better for our story.*

But

*But since the parting hour, tho' late, will come,
And all of you, at least as I presume,
May find some kind, instructive she at home,
Then certain lectures will, I hope, be read,
Those morals then, which from your thoughts were fled,
Shall be put home to you, and taught a-bed.*

